

CHATHAM HOUSE

The Royal Institute of International Affairs



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe

Author(s): Lord Soames

Source: *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Summer, 1980, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer, 1980), pp. 405-419

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2617389>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Royal Institute of International Affairs and *Oxford University Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*

FROM RHODESIA TO ZIMBABWE

*Rt Hon Lord Soames**

FROM the beginning, Britain's commitment in Rhodesia was hesitant and reluctant—the reverse of full-hearted. The British Colony in the lands deemed to be within Lobengula's allegiance began as a private enterprise venture inspired by Cecil Rhodes. It developed rapidly through the efforts of individual settlers and private capital attracted there by a locally responsible government. And over the last fifteen years of its life as a British Colony, this tradition of detachment from the metropolitan power reached its culmination in that ultimate act of political private enterprise—Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

There is consequently something of an irony in the fact that, in the end, Britain could only terminate her constitutional connection with Rhodesia by taking on a role—and attendant risks—that was more extensive and demanding than any which she had played at any previous stage in Rhodesia's history. In Rhodesia the drama of colonial history was played in reverse—metropolitan power having been very limited at the beginning, but with total responsibility being assumed at the end. Indeed one cannot help feeling that this end was somehow connected with that beginning by the obscure workings of nemesis: that the half-heartedness of the commitment accepted by the British Government at Cecil Rhodes's instance in 1889 was the first step down the road which led to a British Cabinet Minister going out to Salisbury almost a hundred years later, equipped with the full panoply of executive and legislative powers to return to the people whence they had come. Perhaps there is a lesson to us in this chain of events—that in politics, as in life in general, it is always wisest and most satisfactory in the long run to be full-hearted in any commitment we may undertake.

Nevertheless, whatever the chain of cause and effect, Britain's historic task of delivering Rhodesia to internationally recognised sovereign statehood under majority rule has now been honourably accomplished. My purpose here is to describe for the record how this was done, and then to offer some reflections, by way of conclusion, on the character of Britain's colonial experience and on its meaning for both the colonised and the colonisers.

The Conservatives take office

I turn first of all to the situation as it was when the present British government took office on May 5, 1979.

*Lord Soames, the last British Governor of Rhodesia, delivered this text as the Cyril Foster memorial lecture at Oxford University on May 19, 1980.

Under the so-called 'internal settlement' a constitution had recently been adopted within Rhodesia, under which, for the first time in the country's history, the Head of State, the Head of Government and most members of both Houses of Parliament were members of the majority race. The Black members of that Parliament had been chosen in an election in which an estimated 65 per cent of the population of the country took part. The Conservative Party had sent a team of observers to witness that election, and it had stated in its own election manifesto that it would 'aim to achieve a lasting settlement to the Rhodesia problem based on the democratic wishes of the people of that country'. The manifesto went on to say that, 'if the Six Principles, which all British Governments have supported for the last fifteen years, are fully satisfied following the present Rhodesian Election, the next government will have the duty to return Rhodesia to a state of legality, move to lift sanctions, and to do its utmost to ensure that the new independent state gains international recognition.'

On the other hand, the United Nations Security Council had adopted on March 8 a resolution which condemned the Rhodesian elections and urged member states not to send observers to them. Neither the member states nor the British Labour government sent official observers to the elections. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had declared on April 26, two days after the publication of the Rhodesian election results, that they were 'null and void'; and again on April 30—almost on the eve of the British General Election—the Security Council adopted another resolution which yet again condemned the elections in Rhodesia and called on member states not to accord recognition to any government set up in consequence of it. To its credit Mr Callaghan's government instructed Ivor Richard, at that time Britain's representative on the Security Council, to abstain from the vote on that resolution—as on the previous one. And in his explanation of the vote, Mr Richard stressed that the British government did not regard either resolution as binding or as circumscribing the freedom of judgment and action of the British Parliament in the exercise of its responsibilities.

As the Conservative Party's election manifesto had made clear, the essential question was how to ensure that Rhodesia, having been granted legal independence by Britain, would secure international recognition. For without international recognition there is no doubt that economic sanctions would have continued to be applied by the majority of states, and that the guerrilla war in Rhodesia would have continued to mount in intensity with growing support from outside. It was clear that Britain by herself could not impose a settlement which would automatically command international agreement leading to the termination of economic sanctions and the end of the war. It was necessary, therefore, to explore with our friends and allies in the European Community, in Nato, and in the Commonwealth what form of settlement would carry the degree of international support required for a legally independent Zimbabwe to begin life with a reasonable chance of stability and racial reconciliation.

It was in this spirit that, on May 15, the new Conservative Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, welcomed the major change which had taken place in Rhodesia as a result of the recent elections and the emergence of an African majority government, and defined the objective of her government as being to build on that change to achieve a return to legality in conditions that secured wide international recognition. She emphasised that the government must and would recognise the realities of the present situation in Rhodesia, but that it must and would also take into account the wider international implications.

International consultations

The stage was now set for the consultations on which the government had said they would embark. A major part in these was played by Lord Harlech, who was named by Mrs Thatcher as her special envoy to Africa. Perhaps it has been insufficiently recognised how wise and appropriate this choice was. In appointing to this task one who had not only served with distinction as a member of a former Conservative administration and as British ambassador in Washington, but who had earned a reputation for fairness and integrity in Rhodesia and indeed throughout Africa as Deputy Chairman of the Pearce Commission, the Prime Minister did much to demonstrate to opinion in Africa, with all the doubts and apprehensions it seemed to feel about the new British government's policy, that the outcome of the government's consultations could not—any more than the verdict of the Pearce Commission—be taken as a foregone conclusion.

The message which emerged from Lord Harlech's mission was clear and unambiguous. He found in Africa an encouraging recognition that major changes had indeed taken place in Rhodesia. But, as Lord Carrington told the House of Lords on July 10, Lord Harlech found also that there was widespread criticism of the new Rhodesian constitution—in particular of the blocking power given to the White minority in Parliament over a wide range of legislation, and also of the character and powers of the Public Service and other Commissions. There was a general feeling also that, in order to be acceptable to the international community, a solution of the problem must be seen to stem from the British government as the constitutionally responsible authority, and that some further attempt must be made to involve all the parties to the dispute in the search for a settlement. These views were clearly by no means confined to the radical end of the political spectrum in Africa. At the same time, it was also evident that this perspective was widely shared in Europe, in the United States, and throughout the Commonwealth.

The next step in the government's consultations was the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which was to take place in Lusaka from August 1 to 7. Rhodesia was bound to be a major preoccupation at this meeting. The problem facing the British government was to seek to ensure that the legitimate interest of the Commonwealth in this problem was turned into a constructive channel—that Britain should retain the greatest possible freedom of manoeuvre to ensure that whatever momentum there was towards a

generally acceptable settlement was not dissipated and was if possible reinforced. There was no lack of foreboding before the Lusaka summit that this problem was not merely difficult but insoluble. Indeed, a leading British weekly (*The Economist*), writing before the British Election, had gone so far as to suggest that the Prime Minister should not attend the meeting at all. Mrs Thatcher herself had no intention of listening to these counsels of despair. She charted the course she had set herself for Lusaka very clearly in a Parliamentary statement on July 25, in the course of which she pledged that the British government would put forward firm proposals, after the Lusaka meeting, on the constitutional arrangements to achieve a proper basis for legal independence for Rhodesia—proposals which would reflect the Six Principles and would be comparable to the basis on which we had granted independence to other former British territories in Africa. She added that this would be addressed to all the parties to the conflict, and that the British government would never subscribe to a solution which sought to substitute the bullet for the ballot box.

The government's approach was unanimously endorsed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, in a joint declaration which was almost as remarkable for what it did not say as for what it did say. Unlike previous Commonwealth declarations on Rhodesia, it contained no condemnation of the illegal regime. Unlike the resolution which the OAU had adopted on July 21, it contained no calls for the reinforcement of sanctions or for the recognition of the Patriotic Front as the sole legitimate and authentic representative of the people of Zimbabwe. Nor did it lay down any conditions for the granting of independence to Rhodesia which were not already at least implicit in the position which the British government had already taken.

In all this the Commonwealth leaders showed wisdom. If they still had doubts about Britain's approach, they were evidently prepared to give us the benefit of them. Furthermore, by agreeing to a framework in very general terms they had compromised no principle to which any of them were attached, had safeguarded their own freedom of manoeuvre for the future—to which they no doubt gave as much weight as we did—and they had avoided a sterile confrontation which would have done neither Rhodesia nor the reputation of the Commonwealth any good. On the other hand, the declaration contained positive statements of the highest importance. It acknowledged that the future government of Rhodesia must be chosen through free and fair elections properly supervised under British government authority, and with Commonwealth observers. And it welcomed the British government's indication that an appropriate procedure for advancing towards these objectives would be for it to call a constitutional conference to which all parties would be invited.

Lancaster House

Within a week of the close of the Lusaka meeting, the British government

sent invitations to Bishop Muzorewa and to the leaders of the Patriotic Front alliance (as it then was) to attend a constitutional conference which was to open at Lancaster House on September 10. At the same time, it published outline proposals for an independence constitution.

These proposals were quite deliberately framed in very general terms. They were very largely compatible with the constitution which had already been adopted in Rhodesia. But at the same time, they took account of the criticisms which had been made of that constitution in Africa and elsewhere in two crucial respects. They stated that the constitution would prescribe procedures to be followed for effecting amendments on lines similar to those contained in other independence constitutions granted by Britain—which implied that the representatives of the minority could not have a blocking power. And they made it clear that the power to make certain senior appointments in the public service and other services would be vested in the Prime Minister. No party to the conference was asked to commit itself to these proposals in advance. Nothing was said about how these or any other proposals would be implemented, or about how the military questions associated with a transition to legal independence should be solved.

This reticence in fact supplied the clue to the two essential elements in the strategy which the British government was to pursue throughout the months of the Lancaster House Conference. In the first place, the British delegation stuck firmly to the view that the order of discussion must start with the destination at which the conference was to arrive—the terms of the independence constitution. Only then should the Conference go on to deal with the route by which that destination was to be approached—the arrangements for implementation of the constitution. This was of fundamental importance. The previous British government's unhappy experience with the Anglo-American proposals launched in September 1977 had been that serious discussion of the independence constitution had never even started, while valuable time had been wasted in sterile controversy over the arrangements for the transition to independence. This was an experience which we were determined not to repeat. We wanted to decide first whether the Sunday School treat was to go to Bognor or Bournemouth. We could discuss later whether it should go by train or coach.

Second, the role adopted by the British government was always to guide the negotiations from the general to the particular. At every stage we sought to introduce—just as we had done before, during and after the Lusaka conference—statements of broad principle to which it was very difficult for the delegations themselves, or their supporters outside Lancaster House, to take exception. We then proceeded step by step to deduce the logical consequences which we argued had to flow from assent to these statements. Here again we were learning from the experience of the past, which strongly suggested that the introduction of too much detail too soon, however worthy the intention with which it was done, in practice led debate into side issues and enabled those

who were so inclined to evade the major questions which *had* to be settled before a solution could be in sight.

This strategy might not in itself have been sufficient to ensure success in the Conference. The three months which it lasted were long enough—too long in the opinion of most of those taking part. But the procedures could no doubt have been, protracted indefinitely if the British government had not displayed both inside and outside Lancaster House the quality which had already suggested itself immediately after it took office—a determination to implement what it believed to be right and defensible, once all the arguments for and against had been deployed, whether all the other parties to the Conference had signified their agreement or not. At each point when the Conference reached a crisis, the British government was ready to take convincing steps to show that it would give no party a veto over the implementation of solutions which ought to commend themselves to reasonable men. At each such stage, it was of course condemned by some for its intransigence. But it stood firm, and its firmness was vindicated at every stage.

Firmness displayed in a vacuum, however, would have achieved little. We must acknowledge that circumstances were working in favour of the government too. Both sides in the war in Rhodesia were weary of it as they had never been weary before. So were the neighbouring states. Moreover, both Bishop Muzorewa's delegation and the Patriotic Front were sustained by the evident conviction that their cause was just and could achieve victory through the ballot box. Bishop Muzorewa's delegation was fortified by its success in winning the support of a large majority of the voting population in an election only five months before the opening of the Conference. And the Patriotic Front believed that history was on its side and that it was indeed, as it had so often told the world, the only authentic representative of the people of Zimbabwe.

It was against this background that the Lancaster House Conference proceeded. There is no need for me to recount its course in detail. It is well known that it was marked by three major turning-points. The first was in mid-October. Bishop Muzorewa's delegation had agreed to the British government's proposals for the independence constitution, and bilateral discussion of the pre-independence arrangements had already begun between British officials and Bishop Muzorewa's delegation. It was only then that, on October 19, the Patriotic Front delegation indicated that it conditionally accepted the constitutional proposals and that the conference as a whole was able to move on to discuss their implementation. It was at this point that the British government revealed for the first time that it was ready to appoint a British Governor with executive and legislative authority to convey Rhodesia to independence.

Again the course of the Conference built up to another crisis almost a month later. It was only on November 15—after a Southern Rhodesia Bill enabling the government to promulgate the independence constitution and to make the arrangements necessary to bring it into effect had completed all its

stages in both Houses of Parliament—that agreement was reached on the transitional arrangements. And that agreement in turn was conditional on the successful outcome of negotiations on a cease-fire.

Now the Conference entered its final and most difficult phase. On November 26, Bishop Muzorewa's delegation accepted the British proposals on the principles of the cease-fire. But a week later the Patriotic Front delegation were still resisting important elements in those proposals. On December 3, an Order in Council was made providing for the appointment of a British Governor in Rhodesia. On December 5, the Patriotic Front accepted the British proposals, and a formal cease-fire agreement was tabled by the British delegation. Immediately thereafter a Zimbabwe Bill was introduced in Parliament to enable Rhodesia to be brought to independence on a date to be decided, and to make consequential provisions in the law of the United Kingdom. On December 7, my appointment as Governor of Rhodesia was announced.

The Lancaster House Conference had now lasted for nearly three months. The final details of the implementation of the cease-fire agreement still remained to be settled. But it was clear that the machinery for the implementation of the cease-fire could not begin to be set in place in Rhodesia until legality had been restored. There could be no question of deploying British or other Commonwealth troops in the territory while it was still in a state of illegality. It was also necessary to be in a position to move quickly from the moment a cease-fire agreement was signed. So the government took the difficult and audacious decision to ask me and my staff to go to Rhodesia before the cease-fire was finally concluded. I left for Salisbury on December 11, on the very day that Lord Carrington made his final presentation of the detailed British proposals for the implementation of the cease-fire.

When I arrived in Salisbury the following day, the local administration accepted my authority. Legality was restored for the first time since November 11, 1965. The basis for United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia automatically fell away, and all remaining British sanctions legislation was repealed.

In taking this course, the government was undoubtedly taking a risk. The war in Rhodesia was still continuing. As Governor I found myself in the position of being Commander-in-Chief of the forces of one side while it was still at war with the guerrilla forces which it was also envisaged should come under my authority. No one could guarantee that either Bishop Muzorewa's delegation or the Patriotic Front delegation would finally sign the proposed cease-fire agreement. Nor could we be certain that other members of the United Nations Security Council would accept the link which we saw between the restoration of legality and the termination of the effect of the mandatory resolutions of the Security Council concerning the application of sanctions. Nevertheless, we were convinced that our bold stroke was a necessary risk, enabling us to keep up the momentum, showing our determination that the

Rhodesia question would finally be resolved, and enabling me to begin the necessary task of taking control of the Rhodesian administration.

I cannot deny that in Salisbury as in London, the next few days brought some anxious moments. Although on December 13 Bishop Muzorewa's delegation announced its acceptance of the British proposals for implementation of the cease-fire, it was only after an additional assembly place for their guerrilla forces had been offered to the Patriotic Front that the proposals were accepted and the Conference report initialled by the Patriotic Front delegation on December 17. But then there was a hiatus while Bishop Muzorewa sought further clarification from me regarding the cease-fire arrangements, and it was not until December 21 that the Conference report and the cease-fire agreement were signed by the leaders of all those delegations in a ceremony at Lancaster House. Nevertheless, the British government's policy of indicating clearly the line which it meant to pursue, and then following it meticulously step by step, had once again been vindicated. It now remained only to implement the Lancaster House Agreement—a task which I am sure few envied me and which I undertook with no illusions about its difficulties.

At Government House

Every detail of the ensuing four months was subsequently observed, recorded and commented on by hundreds of representatives of the world's press, as well as by official and unofficial observers from the Commonwealth and from many Western countries. There is perhaps little I can add to what they have said and will say about the stewardship which I exercised during that period. The problems which I and my administration had to face were difficult and complex, with many shifts of mood and atmosphere from day to day. But the way in which we had to deal with the problems we faced was dominated by a simple consideration which was too often overlooked by critics of Her Majesty's Government, from whatever point of view they spoke.

Although in law I was an autocrat, vested with full executive and legislative authority, in practice I was also the representative of only one of the parties to an agreement to which the two other parties had subscribed as free agents. Both of those two parties, although accepting my legal authority, disposed of forces far larger than any at my disposal. Indeed, there were no 'forces' as such under my direct control—only Commonwealth military personnel acting as monitors of the established armies in the country. The fact is that no settlement would have been agreed which gave the British Governor forces directly under his own control.

The structure of the Lancaster House Agreement was thus built on a balance of trust—or, if you prefer, of mistrust. Each party to the Lancaster House Agreement undertook obligations which it had a duty to fulfil, as Lord Carrington reminded them when it was signed. My duty was to establish and maintain as best I could the conditions in which a free and fair election could be

held—a task in which, I am glad to say, international opinion eventually held virtually unanimously that I was successful. But I could not do this by turning Rhodesia overnight into a humanitarian utopia. My responsibility was all-embracing—my real power was negligible. The only means available to me for influencing the development of the situation were political and psychological—matching the progress I made with the progress which others were prepared to make towards fulfilling their obligations. As the referee, I wanted to see the game played to a finish. But I could not simply turn a blind eye to malpractices going on in some of the scrimmages. Nor on the other hand did I want, if I could avoid it, to award so many penalty kicks to one side that the other walked off the pitch—as well it might. In short, the only way to see the game through to the end was to blow the whistle from time to time so that a measure of rough justice could be done—and be seen to be done.

I cannot deal with this chapter in the story without saying something of the way in which the military aspects of the Lancaster House Agreement were implemented. In the annals of the British Army and of the other Commonwealth armies which contributed to the cease-fire monitoring force, I do not think there can ever have been an operation remotely like this one. Within a week of the signature of the cease-fire agreement, over thirteen hundred men had to be deployed, with the invaluable assistance of the United States Air Force, to Rhodesia and inside it, with all their equipment and transport. Many of them had only a week to prepare in lonely outposts for the arrival of the Patriotic Front forces. No one knew how many could come in or even whether they would come in at all. But they did—over twenty-one thousand of them eventually—and then followed the delicate task of supervising a cease-fire on terms on which surely no two armies had ever agreed before. This challenge demanded all the diplomatic skill and organising ability of the British soldiers and their comrades from Australia, Fiji, Kenya and New Zealand.

Further study will, I hope, be given in the future to this uniquely successful exercise in peace-keeping. But I believe it will be generally agreed that its success depended largely on two factors: on the fact that the neutral troops were located *with* the opposing forces of either side, not *between* them; and because the exercise was conducted within a predetermined time limit. There was, therefore, no question of the monitoring force patrolling boundary lines between the Security Forces and the Patriotic Front forces, with all the problems that that would have entailed. Neither was there any question of an open-ended commitment—although this circumstance did not make the operation any less risky from the point of view of the brave men who performed it.

Ten anxious weeks were to pass between the final act of the Conference and the completion of the electoral process in Rhodesia. With the co-operation of the Rhodesian public service—to which I must pay tribute—much was achieved in those weeks. Border crossings were reopened, many thousands of

refugees were returned from neighbouring countries, increasing numbers of prisoners and detainees were released, maize shipments to Zambia were resumed, and an election campaign was conducted by all parties to the Lancaster House Agreement as exiled leaders returned and others emerged from years of confinement or forced inactivity.

Naturally, right up almost to the end of the election period, there was an atmosphere of intense suspicion on all sides. None of the parties to the Agreement was convinced that the others would finally honour it—until the passage of time and a carefully calculated momentum of events made the outcome suddenly seem as though it had after all been inevitable from the start. During this period, I found myself bitterly criticised on three counts in particular; and, although I feel that the outcome is in itself a sufficient refutation of those criticisms, I propose to say something now about them, because the answers bring out very clearly the peculiar character of the arrangements under which Rhodesia had to be governed during those final days of British rule.

One issue was that of the deployment after the cease-fire of the Rhodesian Security Forces. When the time allotted for the assembly phase of the cease-fire had elapsed, I took the view that, good as the response of much of the Patriotic Front forces had been to the obligations placed on them by the cease-fire agreement, those remaining in breach of the agreement posed a serious threat to law and order, and that this situation was beyond the capacity of the police to contain. I therefore authorised, as the Lancaster House Agreement permitted me to do, the deployment of the Rhodesian armed forces in support of the police in their task of maintaining law and order. I regretted having to take this decision. But I saw no alternative. I believe it was right. And whatever criticisms were voiced at the time inside and outside Rhodesia, the fact is that in the end no one was to claim that my decision had influenced the election result. I must also add, in response to those who criticised me for not deploying the Patriotic Front forces that had accepted my authority, that I did in fact make full use of the network of Patriotic Front liaison officers—who played a most valuable part in helping to lower the temperature. Beyond this employment of Patriotic Front elements it would plainly have been unwise to go.

A second issue was my decision to authorise the continued deployment of a small South African force guarding the northern approaches to Beit Bridge. Here it was necessary to weigh two conflicting pressures against each other. On the one hand there was the storm of international protest that I knew would follow my decision—and there was indeed a storm, including a debate in the Security Council. But on the other hand was the need to continue to reassure White opinion in Rhodesia, and in particular the Rhodesian military, that what they considered to be their vital security interests were not being put at risk in the run-up to the election. I took the view, I believe rightly, that—however ill-founded the feelings, both within Rhodesia and at the United

Nations, about the role of the South Africans at Beit Bridge—the essential need was to retain the full co-operation of all parties within Rhodesia. In the end the issue was resolved by South Africa's decision to withdraw its forces—from which, I might add, there flowed no ill consequences for Rhodesian security.

The third major focus of criticism concerned the action which I took in response to the intimidation and the inflammatory speeches which characterised the election campaign in certain areas. Twice in February I took legislative action on this question. On February 5 I took powers to enable me to suspend an individual from taking part in the election campaign, or to suspend a party from campaigning in a particular area, or to suspend all campaigning in a given area. And on February 12 I took the power to exclude an area from the election altogether if I was satisfied that it was impossible to conduct a free and fair election campaign there. I took action subsequently to exclude one candidate from the election campaign—although he was not prevented from standing—and to suspend one party from campaigning in two small districts. This action naturally exposed me to a cross-fire from opposite directions. On the one hand I was blamed for going too far, and on the other for not going far enough. The pressures from both sides were intense. But again I believe in retrospect that the action I took was broadly right. I am satisfied that the pressure of intimidation on the electorate eased in the closing stages of the campaign—let others argue whether this was *propter hoc* and not merely *post hoc*. And—most important of all—in the event no party withdrew from the election on the ground that it had been placed at an unacceptable disadvantage by intimidation by others.

And so, eventually, we arrived at polling at the end of February and the declaration of the Common Roll election result on March 4. It was not for me to concern myself about the result. It was for the people to make their choice. As it happened, and by the greatest good fortune, they spoke very clearly indeed. There could be no ground for anyone to contest, had they wished to, a result which was so clearcut and unequivocal. And the integrity of Britain's intentions and of my administration was demonstrated beyond question.

Zimbabwe now faces the future under the leadership of a man whom, by independence, I had come to know as a friend and respect as a statesman. He, his colleagues in government and his fellow countrymen, face many difficulties as they seek to overcome the divisions of the past and work for the creation of a more just and humane society. I wish them well in their task, in which they will have all the support which the British government and, I hope, the rest of the international community can afford to give them.

Above all, let us extend to Prime Minister Mugabe and his colleagues our understanding as they wrestle with the enormous challenge which faces them, and take the steps which it will be necessary for them to take in meeting it. And let us pray that elsewhere in Africa the lessons of Zimbabwe may be learned before it is too late.

Reflections on the colonial experience

For Britain, the end of her constitutional responsibility for Rhodesia marks not merely the end of a chapter—it marks the close of a whole book in the many-volumed history of our country: the book of Empire. Before we finally put this volume on the shelf and turn our hands to the still unwritten pages of the future that lie before us, it is right to try to reach some general conclusions about Britain's encounter with what used to be called the colonial world, and upon what lessons can be drawn from that experience for the future.

The new Zimbabwe is the heir of many and diverse traditions of thought and behaviour. After only four months as Governor in Salisbury I could not, as I would like, say anything with authority about the African traditions which must play an increasingly large and eventually a preponderant part in the life of the new state—traditions particularly of community, solidarity and dignity.

But what of the many ways of thinking and acting derived from Britain and from Europe which have woven themselves over ninety eventful years into the fabric of the new Zimbabwe? It is about these that I would like to say something as the last representative in Rhodesia of the governing power under whose auspices those ways and ideas have been introduced into that part of Africa.

The system of which the people and the government of Zimbabwe are the inheritors derives in large part from three features of the European nineteenth century. There is the principle of individualism and freedom of enterprise, which supplies the spirit which animates the modern sector of the economy in Zimbabwe as in most of the former European colonial territories. There is the principle of rationality, of scientific thought and technological prowess, which has supplied the means of economic progress and expansion. And there is the principle of law, order and impartial administration which has constituted the framework of the State.

The system which Zimbabwe inherits is built around these principles of economic and political individualism, of scientific reason and of lawful administration. But gentler influences have also played a most important part.

There has been the influence of Christianity which, in its diverse forms, has introduced new ideas concerning the individual soul, the spirit of fellowship or community, and the relationship of individuals and communities to a transcendent God. The Christian educational missions have been the instrument by which so many Africans have been introduced to the great treasury of Western learning and experience. The virtues and values which Christianity represents have become pervasive in the society which constitutes the new Zimbabwe.

And then there has been the influence of the English tongue and its literature. Zimbabwe inherits a language which provides a ready means of communication not only with the world outside the country but between all Zimbabweans themselves. They inherit a culture which is a many-rooted stock

from which authentic Zimbabwean arts are already blossoming, grafted together with the vitality of the vernacular traditions.

Over the past ninety years the forces of economic progress, science and the state, on the one hand, and education and the English language on the other, brought Zimbabwe and its peoples—like all the former colonial peoples—into an ever-widening circle of relations with the world outside. As the years passed, the people of Rhodesia were propelled further and further out upon the rough waters, the turbulent cross-currents and the storms of contemporary life.

The central element in this experience was the growth in Zimbabwe of a sense of nationality—of citizenship and its rights. This idea came to Zimbabwe along with the other European concepts which have laid the foundations of its new society—and it was powerfully reinforced by the experience of men and women of all races fighting under the British Crown in many parts of the world in the two great wars of this century.

Indeed, over the past ninety years the main theme of the historical development of Rhodesia—as of the whole former colonial world—was the ever-increasing pervasiveness of the idea of political rights, which is one of the central values of Western civilisation. In Rhodesia these were exclusively reserved at first to members of the White community. But eventually the sense of nationality and of the inherent rights of all citizens possessed the minds of the entire people: and it fuelled a struggle for recognition which, having for years been prevented from obtaining its object by peaceful parliamentary means, then took up arms; and which has now at last found fulfilment through a lawful constitutional process and democratic elections.

Zimbabwe has indeed passed through testing fires. Life has forced the leaders of its people to reflect upon the value and meaning of the whole complex of Western ways and ideas of which the country's modern society has been constituted. In particular, in Zimbabwe as throughout the Third World, there has flowed from the colonial experience a stream of radical thought directed against the cult of individual selfishness and materialism, which many have come to feel systematically underlies the system which grew up in the colonial world under the influence of the West.

It must be for all free peoples to work out their destiny for themselves. This is, indeed, a central concept of the civilisation of which Zimbabwe is the heir, and it is one which especially exemplifies what Britain and the Commonwealth stand for politically. Accordingly the people of Zimbabwe must form their own judgment about the traditions they inherit, whether from their African or their European past.

But, having after a fashion presided over the process by which the best principles of British colonial policy have at last been applied in bringing Rhodesia to lawful independence by a democratic process, I feel that I am entitled to commend, not only to Zimbabweans but to all those seeking to rebuild their society in the post-colonial world, the substance of the principles and values upon which the system they have inherited was built.

In the economic sphere, it must be acknowledged that the spirit of individual enterprise, and the opportunities offered by access to the open world markets, are of crucial importance for the continuing dynamism and progress of Zimbabwe's economy, as of the economy of every Third-World country. The energies of the broad masses of the people must be better focused: a great economic potential resides in them, together with important means for a better life for all. Those energies will be tapped by invoking new concepts of economic and social organisation. And this includes concepts of communal endeavour which must serve as a balance and corrective to the individualism which is the chief legacy of colonial rule in the economic sphere. But, in the instruments through which economic progress is pursued, diversity is possible and is certainly desirable. There are countless pathways to the future: true wisdom surely lies in refusing none of them.

The same wisdom also surely applies to the sphere of ideas—the world of spirituality, of culture and education. Intellectual progress depends upon rational discourse, which in turn depends upon openness in enquiry and debate—both at home and in relation to the wider world. It is true that from the moral point of view there is something restless and overweening in modern man's search for intellectual mastery of the material world. It is true also that in political life freedom must always be balanced by order, and individuality by respect for the claims of the community. Zimbabwe, like all other lands, must find her own balance between these inherently conflicting values. But one of the most valuable legacies of the colonial experience, I believe, will be a rational concern for that spiritual and intellectual pluralism which—like the economic diversity of Western enterprise—has shown itself to be such a potent and creative force in world history.

Law, order, justice and impartial administration are also concepts embodied in the colonial inheritance, upon which the people of Zimbabwe and other lands are moving towards their own original judgment as their state evolves. In any society constituted as Rhodesia and other colonies have been, there is inevitably a need to bring the people and the structure of the state closer together. The people progressively develop new political conceptions and a wider notion of citizenship; and the state must also adapt itself to a more popular understanding of the processes of justice and administration. So much is inevitable and right. But in this evolution it would be a mistake to forget both the humanity and the efficiency which resides in the system of government of which Zimbabwe is the heir.

Above all—and on this theme I conclude—it can surely be hoped that in Zimbabwe especially, anyone earnestly reflecting upon the meaning and ultimate reason of the tragedies of the past fifteen years will understand the importance of the principle of constitutionalism. This is in my belief the single most important legacy bequeathed specifically by Britain to this new country.

In a progressive country, change is constant. The principle of constitutionalism is that the change which is necessary should take place by an

orderly process, subject both to law and to consent ascertained by the means provided in the law. As I think the first Duke of Wellington put it—‘if there must be revolution, let there be revolution under law’. In this way the scope of the wilful and the arbitrary, which is always a factor in human destinies, may be reduced; and time—that essential element of all politics—may be afforded to those who must learn new ways. In this manner the people may be carried with their government, assuring by their understanding and consent to what is required of them that popular foundation without which all policy is ultimately vain.

For, concealed within the forms and even the aridities of constitutional behaviour there is a subtle healing art—an art which closes wounds, which unites what has been divided, which subdues antagonisms, and which brings people together. We have only to look at the most recent months in the history of Zimbabwe to see into the heart of this great truth.